

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5504

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0856

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR PFOR SE UK MP

SUBJECT: RETURN OF BIOT ISLANDS TO SEYCHELLES

REF: (A) STATE 244673; (B) PORT LOUIS 0016; (C) NAIROBI 540

1. MY VIEWS AS TO RAMGOOLAM'S POSITION ON RETURN OF ALDABRA, FARQUHAR AND ILE DESROCHES TO THE SEYCHELLES UPON ITS INDEPENDENCE REMAIN ESSENTIALLY AS DESCRIBED IN REF B.

2. TO ANSWER DEPARTMENT'S INQUIRY REF A MORE SPECIFICALLY, I CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING POINTS MOST PERTINENT:

(A) IN MY NUMEROUS DISCUSSIONS WITH RAMGOOLAM ABOUT DIEGO AND INDIAN OCEAN IN LAST SEVENTEEN MONTHS I HAVE DETECTED NO INTENTION WHATSOEVER ON HIS PART TO SEEK RETURN OF CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO TO MAURITIUS. HIS MOST RECENT PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT ON DIEGO ON OCTOBER 19 WAS HIS SPECIFIC RECOGNITION OF UKG RIGHT TO RETAIN CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO PER UK-GOM AGREEMENTS AT TIME OF MAURITIAN INDEPENDENCE.

(B) RAMGOOLAM'S CONSISTENT POSITION HAS BEEN
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TO SUPPORT ZONE OF PEACE CONCEPT AND OPPOSE

DIEGO UPGRADE AS WELL AS ANY NEW ADDITIONAL BASES FOR ANY OUTSIDER IN INDIAN OCEAN AREA. IT IS ALSO QUITE CLEAR THAT HE WANTS TO PROTECT MAURITIAN RIGHTS TO FISHERY AND MINERAL RESOURCES IF EVER FOUND IN CHAGOS AREA. (RELIABLE WITNESS INFORMED ME SOME MONTHS AGO THAT AT COMMON-WEALTH PRIME MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN JAMAICA THIS YEAR WHEN INDIAN OCEAN ISSUE DISCUSSED IN CAMERA RAMGOOLAM COMMENTED THAT MOST AGITATION AGAINST FOREIGN BASES, MAINLY DIEGO, WAS MERE TALK AND NONE OF THOSE FROM THIS AREA WHO HAVE BEEN COMPLAINING ABOUT DIEGO ACTUALLY HAVE THE MILITARY POWER TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.)

(C) AS LONG AS RAMGOOLAM REMAINS IN POWER I SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT HE WILL CHANGE HIS BASIC POSITION IN SPITE OF FACT THAT SOVIETS AND INDIANS WOULD NO DOUBT LIKE TO SEE HIM DO SO.

(D) TOUGH ANTI-AMERICAN LEFT-WING LEADER BERENGER IS ALREADY ON RECORD DEMANDING THAT DIEGO SHOULD BE CEDED BACK TO MAURITIUS. IF HE SHOULD EVER COME TO POWER HE WOULD NO DOUBT PUSH THAT POLICY. BUT HE WOULD DO SO IN ANY EVENT REGARDLESS OF WHAT DISPOSITION IS MADE OF THE THREE ISLANDS IN THE SEYCHELLES AREA. MEANWHILE NONE OF THE OTHER MAURITIAN OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE TAKEN THIS POSITION NOR ARE THEY LIKELY TO DO SO IN THE FUTURE.

3. ONE OF MY MAIN REASONS FOR CONCURRING WITH EMBASSY NAIROBI'S EARLIER POSITION (REF C) WAS NOT RESTRICTED TO PURELY MAURITIAN CONSIDERATIONS BUT WAS BASED ON WHAT I CONSIDER TO BE BROADER BASIC LONG-RANGE US INTERESTS. IN MY VIEW IT IS NEITHER LOGICAL NOR WISE FOR US TO HANG ANOTHER POLITICAL ALBATROSS AROUND OUR NECK FOR THE SAKE OF THE MOST FAR-FETCHED MINUSCULE HYPOTHETICAL MILITARY ADVANTAGE WHICH I DOUBT WILL EVER BE USED. WE ALREADY HAVE OUR HANDS FULL POLITICALLY DEFENDING DIEGO, SO WHY

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ASK FOR MORE SUCH PROBLEMS? WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO HANG ON TO DIEGO SUCCESSFULLY DEPITE SOVIET AND INDIAN-INSPIRED COMPLAINTS AND AGITATION, AND I SEE NO REASON WHY A RETURN OF THE THREE ISLANDS TO THE SEYCHELLES NEED BE CONSIDERED A PRECEDENT AFFECTING DIEGO, WHICH HAS ITS OWN LEGAL BASIS, AS LONG AS WE HAVE THE UK WITH US.

4. MOREOVER BY DOING THE SENSIBLE AND REALISTIC THING

WITH THE SEYCHELLES AND UK RE ALDABRA, FARQUHAR AND
ILE DESROCHES, WE MIGHT JUST BE DOING FRIENDLY PLAYBOY
MANCHAM A MUTUALLY HELPFUL FAVOR AND THEREBY LESSENING
THE CHANCES OF A LEFT-WING TAKEOVER IN THE SEYCHELLES
WHICH COULD SOME DAY GIVE US (INCLUDING BOTH NAVY AND
AIR FORCE) SOME ANNOYING HEADACHES. OF COURSE EMBASSY
NAIROBI IS IN BEST AND PROPER POSITION TO JUDGE THIS
POINT, BUT BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER HERE HAS INDICATED
TO ME THAT THERE IS SOME CONCERN IN UK CIRCLES ABOUT
MANCHAM'S CAPACITY TO COPE WITH HIS OPPOSITION IN
SEYCHELLES.
MANHARD

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